

IT Procurements Aid Disabled Veterans

GSA VETS PROGRAM STEERS FEDERAL BUSINESS TO THOSE WHO HAVE SACRIFICED FOR THE NATION.

By HARRISON DONNELLY
MIT EDITOR

A General Services Administration (GSA) program established a year ago to steer federal information technology services business to service-disabled-veteran-owned small companies has yielded \$77 million in task orders so far, with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense and Agriculture leading the way.

If all options are exercised, the 37 task orders already issued through the Veterans Technology Services (VETS) Governmentwide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) program will provide a total of \$293 million to the service-disabled veteran-owned (SDVO) small firms, according to Mary Parks, director of GSA's Small Business Governmentwide Acquisition Contracts Center.

Backers of the VETS GWAC program describe it as an important element of a broader, presidentially directed effort to provide increased economic opportunity for those who have sacrificed to defend the nation. Many federal agencies reportedly have lagged in that effort, however, although GSA officials expect that their agency will meet the goal of doing 3 percent of acquisitions with disabled veterans this year.

"It's been an exciting year for us," Parks said of her work on VETS GWAC. "We've developed whole new relationships with a group of industry partners who are very eager to show government agencies how good they are. We've also met a lot of agency customers, contracting officers and program officials who are very eager to do business with service-disabled veterans as well. So it's been an exciting time for us, and also for the service-disabled veterans—not only those on the contract, but also those who are teaming with the contract holders.

"There's been a lot of interest. The industry partners have worked hard on getting the word out about the contract. GSA as a whole has also worked hard at getting the word out, through various venues and training events,"

Parks continued.

A total of 15 federal agencies have issued task orders under the program, which has a five-year base period, with one five-year option, and a \$5 billion contract ceiling. Forty-four small SDVO firms are eligible to participate as prime contractors in the program, of whom more than half have been issued a task order under VETS.

"It's significant that more than half have received a task order in one year," said Parks. "That's really amazing, and shows how competitive these vendors are."

The VETS program comprises two functional areas. Functional area 1, which represents the vast majority of task orders awarded, covers systems operations and maintenance. Functional area 2, with about \$5 million in task orders, covers systems engineering and design.

"It's understandable right now that more people will be spending money on systems that are already operational than on new systems," Parks said. "But we hope that over time the new systems development will increase as well."

As Parks noted, the executive order directing establishment of the program also called on all federal agencies to increase business with disabled veterans. GSA did about 1.45 percent in 2006, and reached 2.2 percent last year. "That's a significant increase, and I think in 2008 we'll be at the 3 percent level," she said. "So that shows that we're making progress, and I think that a lot of agencies are also making progress."

The GSA official also pointed to the agency's efforts to increase awards on the GSA Federal Supply Schedule to service-disabled veterans. There are a total of 797 service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses on GSA Schedules now, covering every commodity and service that GSA has schedules on, including tools and appliances, facilities maintenance and general products. Total sales to service-disabled veterans on the GSA Schedules program in 2007 were \$789.7 million. In the first quarter of FY 2008, sales were \$221.6 million, which would work out to more than \$880 million over a full year.

DEFENSE ADVOCATES

Critical elements in the success of the VETS GWAC program, Parks emphasized, have been the support of agency officials and active marketing by participating SDVO companies.

"One of the key things that we've found is that the DoD small business specialists, especially for the Air Force and Army, have facilitated training sessions on VETS for their program officers and contracting activities, so we've been able to get in front of Air Force and Army customers, and train them on what VETS GWAC can do for them. That's been a real key. The small business specialists in DoD have been real advocates for the service-disabled-veterans initiative," Parks said.

A number of high-level DoD and other federal officials have voiced strong support for VETS and other veteran-focused procurement programs. Most recently, Secretary of the Army Pete Geren early this year issued a memo calling on Army acquisition professionals to aggressively include SDVO small businesses in contract solicitations.

In the memo, Geren acknowledged that the Army "has not yet achieved the goal" of having SDVO small businesses participate in 3 percent of the total value of all prime contract and subcontract awards for each fiscal year.

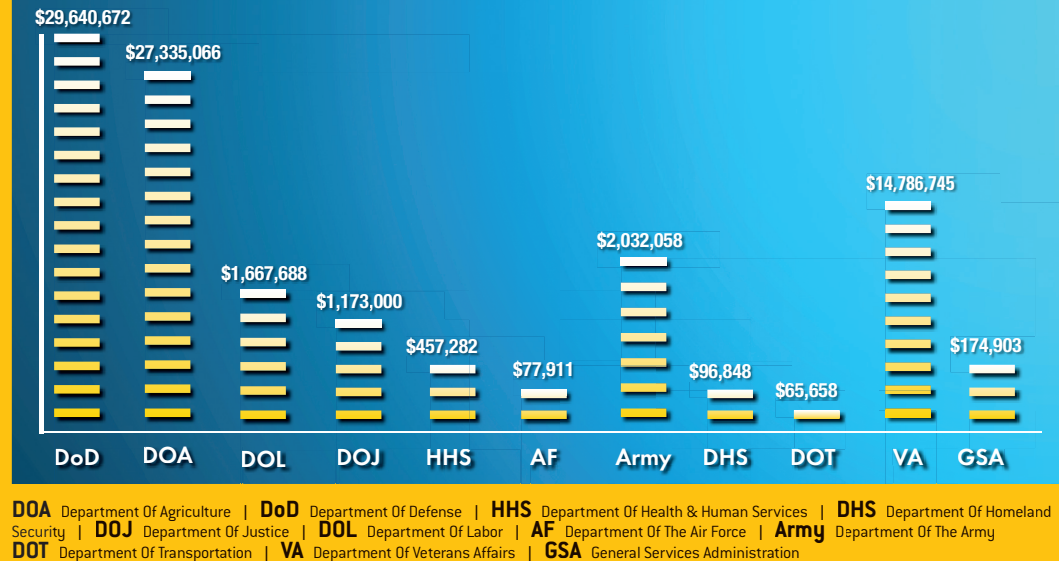


Mary Parks

VETS Orders

as of January 31, 2008 in obligated dollars

Total: **\$77,507,831.00**



In addition, Shay Assad, DoD director of defense procurement and acquisition policy, released a statement last summer urging procurement officials to make greater advantage of VETS GWAC, and outlining procedures for its use. Other expressions of support for greater reliance on SDVO small firms have come from Air Force, VA and Office of Management and Budget officials.

GSA officials have also worked to raise awareness of the VETS GWAC program. "Any time you launch a new contract, getting the word out to customers can be difficult," Parks said. "But the VETS GWAC Catalog [published by MIT in 2007] was a big help, and the small business specialists that have helped us get in front of their contracting staffs to talk about this have been very helpful as well. Both DoD and the civilian activities have been very helpful.

"The fact that the VETS GWAC contract holders have been so willing to market this vehicle and give this as their preferred contact has been very helpful to us, because they are willing to bring us opportunities so that we can sit down with the contracting office and talk to them about the contract and what you can and can't do with it, and answer any questions they might have. Their ability to market the contract, and to team with us to help educate and train customers, has been the best thing about this contract," she continued.

MARKETING THE VEHICLE

Among the 44 VETS GWAC contractors, the most successful in terms of task orders won has been HMS Technologies, a Martinsburg, W.Va., firm that focuses on providing mobile computing, systems integration and Web-centric development services to the health care, first responder and public safety markets.

HMS has won seven task orders so far, compared with two for the next most successful company, according to Harry M. Siegel, HMS president and chief executive officer.

Much of HMS's work has been with the VA. For example, the firm received a task order of about \$4 million for the VA National Data Center program. "As prime contractor, we are designing regional data centers for the VA nationwide. They've decided to take the IT equipment out of the hospitals, and have each provider tie into a data center at a regional facility. That saves IT support staff funds, and is a better cost model for them," Siegel said.

Another HMS effort involves the VA Enterprise Framework Initiative, with a \$2.5 million task order to provide "a total national enterprise framework solution that is being deployed in two VA regions, which will set the tone for enterprise framework design for the entire VA," Siegel explained. Tasks include field enablement, reporting and procedure support, network and systems management deployment, asset inventory tracking, service desk implementation,

and project and technical delivery management.

Siegel attributes the success of his company with VETS GWAC to hard work and a commitment to marketing.

"One of the reasons we've been so successful is because we understand that in a GWAC, you need to market and bring work to the vehicle," he said. "Ninety percent of the work that goes out on that vehicle has been marketed by someone. If you've marketed it, and understand more about the requirement from that client than your competitor, then you probably have an advantage when you write your proposal.

"In most of the work that we've been able to win, we've convinced clients that GSA is a wonderful organization, and that the VETS GWAC is

a great vehicle. There are some advantages to government clients when they choose to use the VETS GWAC vehicle. One is that they know they are going to get one of the premier SDVO businesses in the country. It's been vetted by GSA technically, financially and in terms of personnel," he added.

Another important advantage of the program for federal officials, Siegel noted, is that task orders cannot be challenged by unsuccessful competitors, thus avoiding major delays that can affect many federal contract awards. "That's very unusual," he pointed out. "It can't be protested either from the inside or the outside. Once they make the award, no one can stop them."

Siegel expressed little sympathy for participating companies that have privately voiced disappointment with the amount of business they have received under the program. "The truth is that the companies that are disappointed need to look in the mirror," he said. "The onus is on the competitor to go out and find the work. The companies that think this is a charity program are sadly mistaken. They need to go out and market opportunities and close business. If they're waiting for GSA to hand them something, and give them work because they were injured in the line of duty, they are mistaken. ★

Contact Editor Harrison Donnelly at harrisond@kmmidmediagroup.com. For more information related to this subject, search our archives at www.MIT-kmi.com.



SECRETARY OF THE ARMY WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Contracting with Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs)

1. The U.S. Army Small Business Program supports the Warfighter while at the same time strengthens America's industrial base. Over 12,000 Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business firms are currently registered in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database. This number continues to grow. -The Center for Veterans Enterprise maintains the VetBiz Vendor Information Pages (VIP), a similar database tracking small businesses in which veterans, to include those who are service-disabled, are majority stakeholders.
2. Despite these accomplishments, the Army has not yet achieved the goal of having SDVOSBs participate in 3 percent of the total value of all prime contract and subcontract awards for each fiscal year, as established by the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-50). Therefore, it shall be a top priority for the Army contracting community to maximize contracting opportunities for, and participation by, businesses owned by service-disabled men and women who served our Nation.
3. To increase procurement opportunities for veterans, Congress passed the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-1 83). This provides for procurement set-asides for SDVOSBs. The rule implementing this Act grants Army acquisition professionals the authority to use the set-aside program. Executive Order 13360 further emphasizes the importance of meeting our 3 percent goal.
4. Army acquisition professionals at all levels must aggressively include SDVOSBs in contract solicitations and increase outreach activities to meet our 3 percent goal. Resources, such as the Veterans Technology Services (VETS) Government-Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC), CCR Database, and VetBiz VIPs, are available to assist contracting personnel to satisfy acquisition requirements through the use of SDVOSBs. The Army Small Business Office website (www.sellingtoarmy.info) is another useful resource to facilitate doing business with SDVOSBs.

SUBJECT: Contracting with Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs)

5. Entrepreneurs who have defended America deserve the opportunity to compete for Army contracts. Their expertise gained in years of service is an important resource we ought to leverage. While I am proud of our past small business performance, I know that the Army is capable of meeting and exceeding the 3 percent goal through innovation and perseverance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pete Geren", is positioned above the printed name.

Pete Geren

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VETS GWAC Contractors

Company Name	Contract No.	FA1	FA2	Small Business	Service Disabled Veteran Owned	Small Disadvantaged	8(A)	Woman Owned	HUBZone	Veteran Owned
Advanced Systems, Inc.	GS-06F-0508Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Aero Tech Service Associates, Inc.	GS-06F-0537Z	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓
American Veterans, LLC	GS-06F-0524Z		✓	✓	✓					✓
C Watkins & Associates, Inc.	GS-06F-0509Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
C2 Solutions Group	GS-06F-0510Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Carolina Management & Technology, Inc.	GS-06F-0539Z	✓		✓	✓					✓
Catapult Technology, LTD	GS-06F-0511Z	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Centuria Corporation	GS-06F-0541Z	✓		✓	✓					✓
Client Server Software Solutions	GS-06F-0512Z	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Compumatics, Inc.	GS-06F-0517Z	✓		✓	✓					✓
Council for Logistics Research, Inc.	GS-06F-0525Z		✓	✓	✓					✓
Craig Technical Consulting, Inc.	GS-06F-0526Z		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DV United, LLC	GS-06F-0513Z	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Engineering Services Network, Inc.	GS-06F-0514Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
FTDATA, Inc.	GS-06F-0515Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Global-BSC Systems, Inc. Joint Venture	GS-06F-0516Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
HMS Technologies, Inc.	GS-06F-0518Z	✓		✓	✓					✓
Hoffman Technologies, Inc.	GS-06F-0522Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Ian, Evan & Alexander Corporation	GS-06F-0527Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Information Innovators, Inc.	GS-06F-0519Z	✓		✓	✓					✓
Innovative Management Concepts	GS-06F-0529Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
INTECON, LLC	GS-06F-0531Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
ISI/PSS Group Joint Venture	GS-06F-0520Z	✓		✓	✓					✓
Kingfisher Systems, Inc.	GS-06F-0534Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
KT Consulting	GS-06F-0538Z	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
MED Trends, Inc.	GS-06F-0542Z	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Mandex, Inc.	GS-06F-0540Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Microtech, LLC	GS-06F-0551Z		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Metters Industries, Inc.	GS-06F-0543Z	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Milvets System Technology, Inc.	GS-06F-0544Z	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Native American Industrial Distributors, Inc.	GS-06F-0545Z	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Penobscot Bay Media LLC	GS-06F-0546Z	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
Professional Solutions, LLC	GS-06F-0547Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Standard Communications, Inc.	GS-06F-0549Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Symphony Consulting Group	GS-06F-0521Z	✓		✓	✓					✓
Systems Made Simple, Inc.	GS-06F-0548Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Triumph Technologies	GS-06F-0523Z	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Tseva Group, LLC	GS-06F-0550Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Veteran Corps of America	GS-06F-0528Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Veteran Engineering & Technology, LLC	GS-06F-0530Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Veteran Enterprise Technology Services, LLC	GS-06F-0536Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Veterans Enterprise Technology Solutions, Inc.	GS-06F-0532Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Vetsamerica Business Consulting, Inc.	GS-06F-0533Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Vision Technologies, Inc.	GS-06F-0535Z	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓